

# GRANDE RIVIERE THEN & NOW



# GRANDE RIVIERE NATURE GUIDE ASSOCIATION

Grande Riviere Nature Association is a community based, volunteered driven organization established in 1999.

# Some of our members

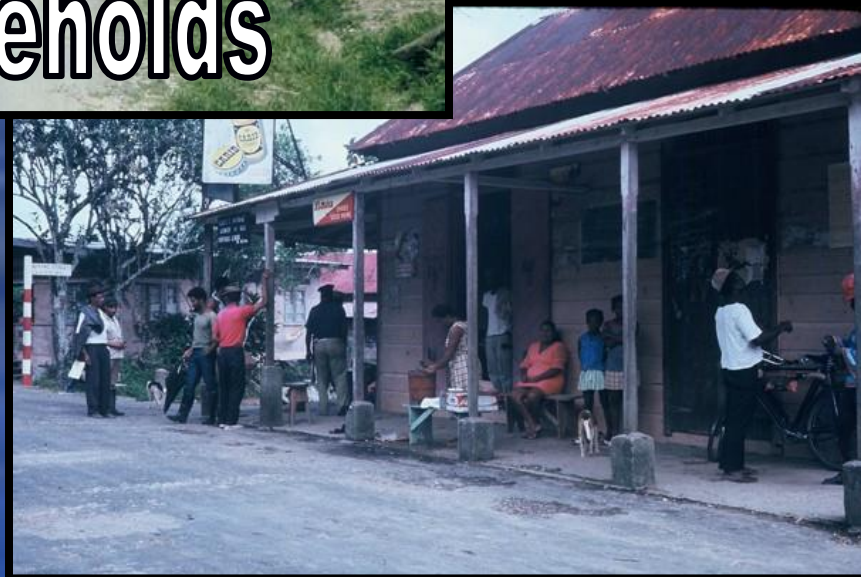


View of Grande Riviere bay

# Grande Riviere in the 1970's



504 people in 134 households

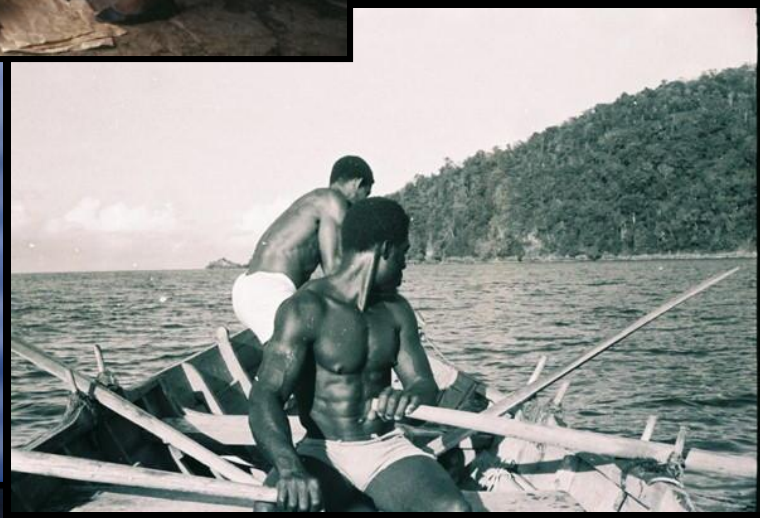


# Occupations:



# ROAD WORK

# FISHING





**And Cocoa**



# And Turtles Were Food...









**There was a time when this was a socially acceptable practice.**



**These children are the adults of today.  
What have they taught their sons and daughters?**

**For a village to survive  
it needs income...**

*Could turtle conservation be used as a vehicle to effect change?*

# Where we are...



G.R.N.T.G.A. was established in 1999.

Its goal was to protect the environment in conjunction with G.R.E.A.T.



Disagreement regarding management styles, divided the groups.

Renewed emphasis was placed on customer satisfaction along with conservation efforts.



# Gang turns turtle-watching outing into nightm

**THE EDITOR:** Allow me on behalf of a concerned group from a government ministry to draw to the attention of the public and the relevant authorities a serious situation which exists at the Grande Riviere Beach.

On May 29 this year, 30 adults and 20 children set out for the beach, famous for its leatherback turtles at this time of year. Our sole purpose was to engage in the pleasurable and educational activity of turtle-watching.

The necessary permission from the Ministry of Agriculture, authenticated by a pass after paying the stipulated fee, was in our possession. After several hours of travelling we arrived at our venue and, full of anticipation, we quickly disembarked from the maxi-taxis.

We were greeted by some unkempt and dirty men who more looked like touts rather than tour guides demanding a fee of \$5

per adult and \$3 per child. We refused their services and proceeded to the beachfront to fulfill the purpose for our visit. The so-called guides were not happy and decided that we were not to view the turtles.

A short while after a large gang of men appeared with big

sticks and attempted to hit us and chase us like animals off the beach.

We left peacefully fearing for our safety and that of the maxi-taxis.

This unpleasant experience has left us very disturbed and we do not look forward to a

recurrence, which is quite possible given the attitude of the people who decided that they must extract money from visitors to the beach at any cost.

The need for some authority to regulate the turtle-watching activity

is recognised, but certainly not those unkempt and uncouth men who appear to be nothing but hustlers. Those selected should be uniformed, trained and in possession of a photo identification with designated authority.

Furthermore, another notice should be placed with information on the procedure to be followed by those who go to view the turtles. Finally, there should be a police presence especially during the peak season.

The concerns of citizens is for authorities to charge a fee for eco-tour management of the citizens.

per adult and \$3 per child. We refused their services and proceeded to the beachfront to fulfill the purpose for our visit. The so-called guides were not happy and decided that we were not to view the turtles.

Some of the members of our group had managed to reach the beach which was covered with turtles coming in to lay or departing after laying, while others were either laying or digging the holes to do so.

The group was observing a turtle digging when the man who appeared to be the head of the gang began in a very aggressive manner to hammer away at the turtle with a big stick. He also began to fill up the hole that the turtle was digging.

All this was his effort to deprive us from witnessing the marvellous occurrence of procreation by the leatherback turtle. The turtle lay slumped on the beach unable to return to the water. After a while she decided that due to the disturbance she would abandon her purpose for the night and return to the water.

Luckily for our group there was no shortage of opportunity to observe the animals at varying stages of their activities because there were so many that night. Our rejected guides not being happy that we were still on the beach and able to witness the tur-

# June 24, 1999

"The necessary permission from the Ministry of Agriculture, authenticated by a pass after paying the stipulated fee, was in our possession."

... the man who appeared to be the head of the gang began ,, to hammer away at the turtle's fin with a big stick. He... began to fill up the hole the turtle was digging.

"We were greeted by some unkempt and dirty men ... who demanded a fee of \$5 per adult..."

"... a large gang of men appeared with big sticks and attempted to hit us and chase us like animals off the beach."

"The so-called guides were not happy and decided that we were not to view the turtles."

# Where we are...



2003 Wildlife Section mandated G.R.N.T.G.A. manage the *prohibited marine turtle nesting site* at Grande Riviere.

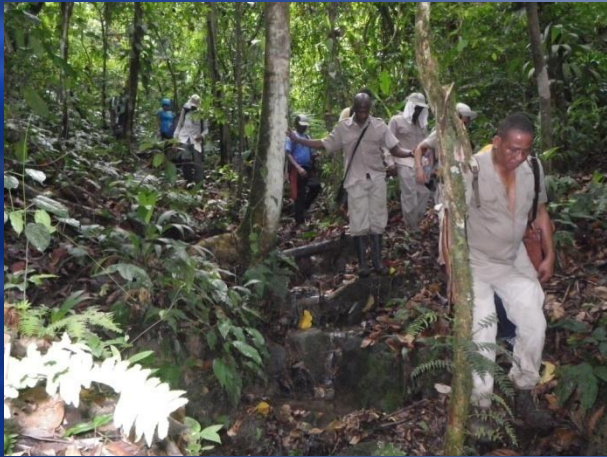
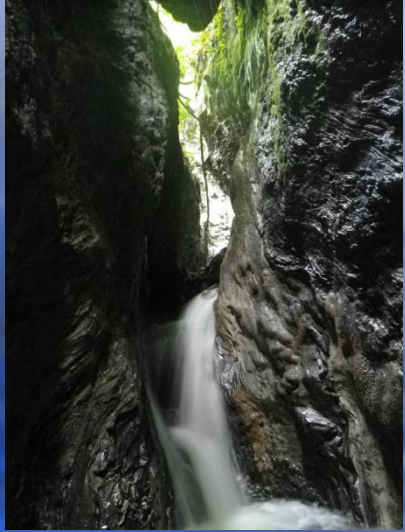


2003 - 2007 Management of conservation conducted from TDO Visitor Center. All payments for tour services made there.

## Results

Public confidence in the conservation initiatives in Grande Riviere is restored and visitors return in large numbers.

# Tours





May 20, 2007

# Sunday Express

Celebrating our 40th Anniversary

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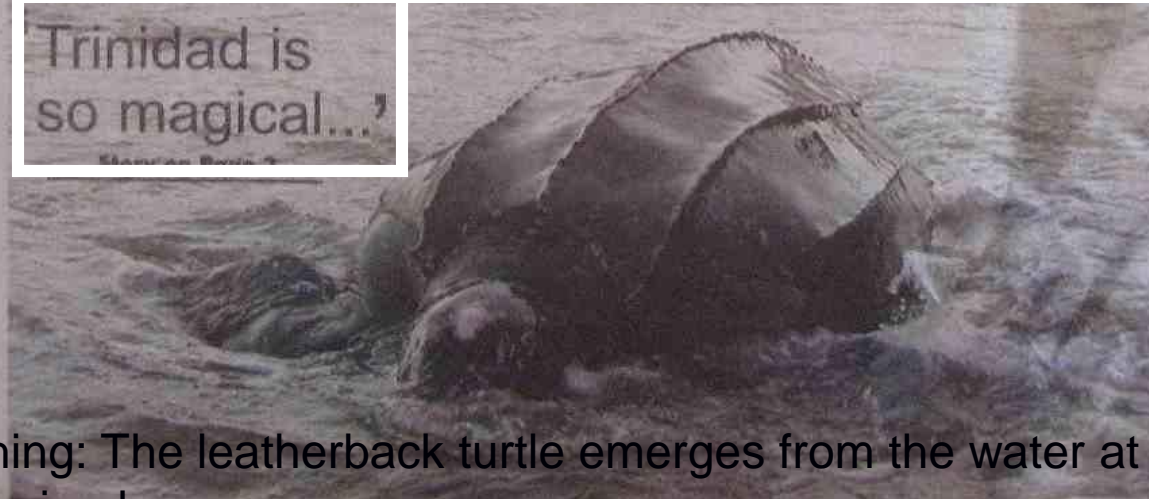
\$3

621-AUTO (2886)

Biggest nesting season in recorded history

## TURTLES IN THE THOUSANDS

Trinidad is so magical...



Shore thing: The leatherback turtle emerges from the water at Grande Riviere before laying her eggs. PHOTO: ALAN WELLS

# Record year for turtles

PHOTOS: ALAN GEERE

Alan Geere  
Editor-in-chief

LOOK OUT! The turtles are nesting... and coming... and coming...

This is set to be a record nesting leatherback turtles on the coast of northern and southern Trinidad with as many as 500 females expected to come ashore.

On just one beach, Grande Riviere, conservationists counted 368 on one night earlier this month. Now they expect this to surpass the previously unthinkable total of 500 females.

"This is an amazing year for the biggest nesting season on record. The turtles are big and robust and we are thrilled to see so many on the beaches," said Scott Eckert, a conservation biologist widely recognised for his pioneering research on turtles.

Wider Caribbean Conservation Network (WIDECARN) and a regular visitor to Trinidad over the past 20 years from his base at Duke University in the United States.

"Trinidad is so magical. It has an incredibly well-managed programme which is one reason why the turtles are thriving."

The giant creatures, which can reach 180 cms in length and weigh 500 kgs, leave their natural habitat of the deep ocean to lay their eggs in the soft, warm sand of Trinidad's beaches.

With their strong flippers they dig a hole around 80cms deep and lay up to 85 round eggs, the size of a small orange.

Carol Philips of Diego Martin, visiting the beach for the first time, was captivated by what she saw. "It is a very humbling experience to see these magnificent creatures at close quarters. And to think that this has been going on for millions of years, puts us humans in our place."

Philips was also able to see the next stage of the process when the hatchlings scrambled up through the sand and set off on the dangerous journey across the beach to the ocean. These tiny young emerged around 60 days after the eggs were laid.

"I found a tiny hatchling—it was brown and fitted perfectly in to the

"This has been a genuine **community-based conservation project**. The patrols and guides are local people who are trained and accredited and the way the community has bought into the project has made it such a **success**."

"This is an amazing year. The biggest nesting season on record... we are thrilled to see so many on the beaches."

"Trinidad is so magical. It has an **incredibly well-managed programme** which is one reason why the turtles are thriving."

With 6-7,000 turtles off the coast laying an average of six clutches of 85 viable eggs, just over three million

ago, when dinosaurs roamed  
● Many leatherback turtles die from eating plastic debris mistaken for jellyfish

ing for the ideal spot to lay her eggs on

facts

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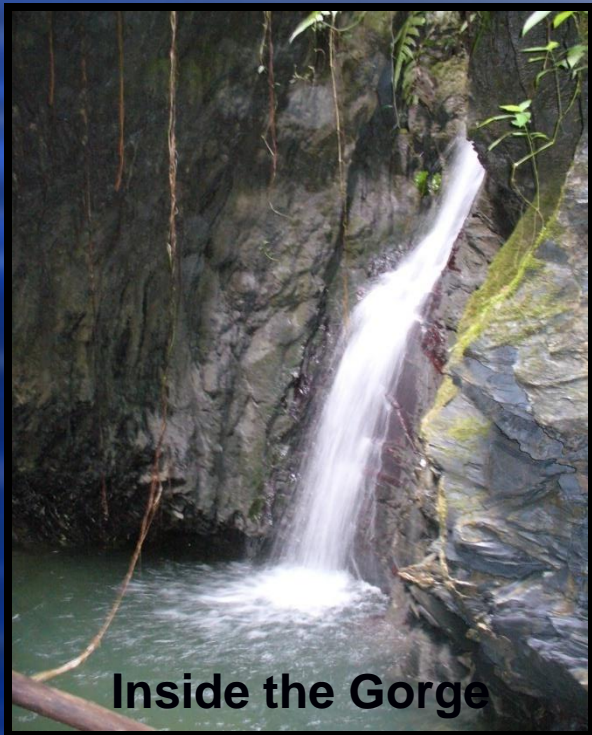
ds the sea, hoping to be the one in a

Nathal-Gyan stresses that everyone must have a Forestry Division permit before going on the beach. These are available from Forestry Division offices and the visitor centre in Grande Riviere.

people who are trained and accredited Blanchisseuse in the north, but

# Grande Riviere in 2018...

Environmental tours



Turtle Conservation



education

education

Why?



Only through the children  
can we save the turtles.

The children will listen.

The children will learn.

# What we do:

- ◆ Marine turtle conservation on Grande Riviere beach (a prohibited site )
- **Patrolling the beach** March 1st through August 31<sup>st</sup> to provide a safe environment for nesting turtles.
- **Collect nesting data**
- **Conduct interpretive tours**
- **Participate in research projects.**



# Some of the successes of the association.

Transforming village attitude from exploitation and consumption to conservation of sea turtles.

G.R.N.T.G.A. manages nesting site on behalf of the state.

Creating a sustainable community through our conservation projects.

Participated in the lobby to change legislation to band sea turtle harvesting.

Creation of T.V.T.

# A unique conservation outreach programme. (Tank Husbandry project & hatchery)



# Release of Juvenile turtles





# Release of Geo-tagged turtles.



# Children at center stage.



# Managing the highest density nesting site in the world.



# Training & Community Outreach



# Environmental Management



# Creating Sustainable Livelihood



# The big unresolved problem today- By Catch.



**“In the end, we will conserve only what we love,  
we will love only what we understand,  
we will understand only what we are taught.”**

**-Baba Dieum**

